Panel on JFK seeks release of CIA data on Oswald

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WASHINGTON – An independent board nvestigating records related to President Kennedy's assassination wants he CIA to release 16 documents pertaining to Lee Harvey Oswald, parts of which have been kept classified.

The Assassination Records Review Board wrote yesterday to President Clinton, notifying him that it has voted to fully release the records. Clinton has 30 days to make a final decision.

Though most of the information in the documents has been available to the public, the CIA has withheld many sections on the grounds that they would reveal an intelligence agent requiring protection, or an intelligence source or method still in use, according to the board.

Classified sections typically would contain names or code names, or operational or organizational information.

Board members voted to fully release the documents because of their significant historical interest, as they "involve core issues surrounding the CIA's records relating to Lee Harvey Oswald," according to a statement.

The documents relate mostly to the opening of Oswald's "201 file," the CIA's file on Oswald, and to certain issues connected with his visit to Mexico City in the fall of 1963, just weeks before Kennedy was assassinated, the board said.

The Warren Commission concluded that Oswald acted alone in killing the president. That was contradicted by a House committee's 1978 finding that a conspiracy was probably at work.

"They won't mean something to everyone," said Tom Samoluk, the board's spokesman, of the classified sections. "But they are pieces of the puzzle."

The board also concluded, after a classified briefing with the CIA, that there was no evidence suggesting the release of the information would harm the United States or individuals whose names would be revealed.